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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4406
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 005198

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2013

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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA AND HAMAS, ISLAMIC JIHAD, HIZBULLAH

REF: PRETORIA 3217

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL COUNSELOR GAYLEATHA B. BROWN.
REASON: 1.5 (B,D)

¶1. (C) THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT (SAG) HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN TALKS IN THE MIDDLE EAST WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF HAMAS, ISLAMIC JIHAD AND HIZBULLAH AT THE DIRECT REQUEST OF PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA) LEADERS SUCH AS ABU MAZEN AND ABU ALLAH, ACCORDING TO SAG FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT LEVANT DIRECTOR ISAAC MOGOTSI. MOGOTSI TOLD POLOFF SEPTEMBER 26 THAT THE PA ASKED THE SAG ABOUT EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO TO WORK WITH THE TERRORIST GROUPS AND CONVINCE THEM THAT VIOLENCE WAS LEADING THE PALESTINIANS DOWN THE WRONG PATH. THE PA WAS HOPING, MOGOTSI SAID, THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE IN NEGOTIATING AN END TO APARTHEID WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE TERROR GROUPS THAT POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS COULD BE SUCCESSFUL. THE SAG HAS NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN PERSUADING REPRESENTATIVES OF HAMAS AND ISLAMIC JIHAD TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA (REFTEL). MOGOTSI SAID THE SAG HAS NOT APPROACHED HIZBULLAH WITH AN OFFER TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA.

¶2. (C) MOGOTSI EXPECTS THE SAG TO CONTINUE TO TRY TO ENGAGE THE TERROR GROUPS. ISRAEL IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE SAG'S APPROACH, BUT MOGOTSI SAID IT WAS CONSISTENT WITH THE EFFORTS ABU MAZEN MADE AND THAT THE SAG EXPECTS ABU ALLAH TO FOLLOW. THE TERROR GROUPS WILL NOT BE DEFEATED MILITARILY, HE SAID, AND THEY MUST BE PERSUADED TO LET NEGOTIATIONS GO AHEAD.

¶3. (C) MOGOTSI SAID THE PA TOLD THE SAG THAT IRAN AND SYRIA CONTROLLED THE TERROR GROUPS (UNLIKE THE AL AQSA MARTYR'S BRIGADE, WHICH WAS UNDER FATAH'S CONTROL) AND THE PA HAD LITTLE INFLUENCE. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE SYRIANS TOLD MOGOTSI IN JUNE 2003 THEY WERE VERY UNHAPPY WITH ARAFAT AND THE PA, WHICH MOGOTSI TOOK AS CONFIRMATION THAT SYRIA REMAINED INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE TERROR GROUPS. NOW, HOWEVER, THE SYRIANS SAY TO THE SAG THAT FOLLOWING SECRETARY POWELL'S POST-IRAQ WAR VISIT TO DAMASCUS THEY HAVE CUT BACK ON THIS SUPPORT. TERROR GROUP REPRESENTATIVES MUST ROTATE IN AND OUT OF DAMASCUS RATHER THAN MAINTAIN A BASE THERE. IN THE SAG'S VIEW, IRAN IS THE PRIMARY FINANCIAL AND ARMS SUPPLIER FOR THE MIDDLE EAST TERROR GROUPS.

¶4. (C) THE SAG'S POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST IS TO SUPPORT THE QUARTET AND THE ROAD MAP, AND TO CONDEMN VIOLENCE ON ALL SIDES, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING FROM SUICIDE BOMB ATTACKS, MOGOTSI SAID. IN SUPPORT OF THIS, MOGOTSI POINTED TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PAHAD'S SEPTEMBER 13 PRESS RELEASE, IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE SAG "CALLS ON THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE NOT TO USE VIOLENCE AS A MEANS TO ACQUIRE PEACE. VIOLENCE AS A TACTIC OR STRATEGY WILL NEVER DELIVER THE PEACE SO DEARLY SOUGHT BY THE ISRAELI OR PALESTINIAN PEOPLES." HE SAID THIS IS THE SAG'S MESSAGE WHENEVER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TRAVEL TO THE REGION. MOGOTSI SAID THE SAG SUPPORTS THE PA AND ARAFAT, WHICH "IS WHAT THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS CONSTITUENCY DEMANDS," BUT PRESIDENT MBEKI SUPPORTS THE ROAD MAP'S TWO-STATE SOLUTION. MBEKI WOULD LIKE ISRAEL TO PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AND SHED WHAT MOGOTSI SAID WAS ITS CURRENT "PARIAH" STATUS ON THE CONTINENT.

¶5. (C) WITH REGARD TO NEXT STEPS, MOGOTSI SAID THE SAG IS BACKING OFF ITS SPIER INITIATIVE FOR THE TIME BEING (REFTEL) AS IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THE INITIATIVE IS ADDING VALUE TO THE

PEACE PROCESS. MOGOTSI BELIEVES THE SAG MIGHT TRY TO REVIVE
SPIER AROUND NEXT APRIL, THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF SOUTH
AFRICA'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY.

HUME